

Talk – What’s holding you back?

At the beginning of the service ask for a volunteer and give them a bag of sweets with some change in it.

SWEETS/GIFT ILLUSTRATION

(Call up the person you gave the money too...)

I have a gift for you, but in order for you to have it, you have to exchange it for all the sweets/money I gave you

What do you think about that?

Swap or no swap?

Were you worried that what you would get in return would be worth less?

We’re told that Jesus has an amazing gift for us, and its so much better than anything we could ever own, but the difference between my gift and Jesus’ gift is that we know exactly what Jesus’ gift is and it requires us to be willing to give up everything.

Lets read our bible reading together

Mark 10: 17-31

The Rich and the Kingdom of God

¹⁷ As Jesus went out into the street, a man came running up, greeted him with great reverence, and asked, **“Good Teacher, what must I do to get eternal life?”**

¹⁸⁻¹⁹ Jesus said, **“Why are you calling me good? No one is good, only God. You know the commandments: Don’t murder, don’t commit adultery, don’t steal, don’t lie, don’t cheat, honour your father and mother.”**

²⁰ He said, **“Teacher, I have—from my youth—kept them all!”**

²¹ Jesus looked him hard in the eye—and loved him! He said, **“There’s one thing left: Go sell whatever you own and give it to the poor. All your wealth will then be heavenly wealth. And come follow me.”**

²² The man’s face clouded over. This was the last thing he expected to hear, and he walked off with a heavy heart. He was holding on tight to a lot of things, and not about to let go.

²³⁻²⁵ Looking at his disciples, Jesus said, **“Do you have any idea how difficult it is for people who ‘have it all’ to enter God’s kingdom?”** The disciples couldn’t believe what they were hearing, but Jesus kept on: **“You can’t imagine how difficult. I’d say it’s easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for the rich to get into God’s kingdom.”**

²⁶ *That* got their attention. **“Then who has any chance at all?”** they asked.

²⁷ Jesus was blunt: **“No chance at all if you think you can pull it off by yourself. Every chance in the world if you let God do it.”**

²⁸ Peter tried another angle: **“We left everything and followed you.”**

²⁹⁻³¹ Jesus said, **"Mark my words, no one who sacrifices house, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children, land—whatever—because of me and the Gospel will lose out. They'll get it all back, but multiplied many times in homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and land—but also in troubles. And then the bonus of eternal life! This is once again the Great Reversal: Many who are first will end up last, and the last first."**

Here we have an account of a very respectful man asking Jesus what must he do to get eternal life

Jesus knew this wasn't a test, but a genuine question...

You see the man had a problem... he wanted this amazing gift of eternal life – but it required the man to follow Jesus,

Which sounds easy enough...

But the difficult thing was that in order to do that there's a cost!

What was the cost for the man – what was he asked to give up?

(His money – everything...)

And why did the man go away sad? (because he loved his money more)

Now, we might be thinking "but you can still have money and love Jesus" – and yes there are indeed people who have lots of money and truly love Jesus....

But this man seemed like he either didn't truly understand the value of the gift of eternal life or he just loved what he had so much that he couldn't let it go. He couldn't do what Jesus asked of him... he loved his money more than he could love Jesus.

But Jesus requires our everything – our whole heart – we can't love something more... you see it's an all or nothing kind of arrangement...

You know I'm totally afraid of heights, well, it's not really heights, it's that feeling of free fall... you know when you get on a swing and you hit that point where the ropes aren't actually holding you – they're slack and you're just in the air on a swing!! Agghh... or when people jump out of aeroplanes – why would you do that?... my cousin used to love doing that – it would be my worst nightmare....

I remember a friend asking me to do a bungee jump – now this wasn't a bungee jump over an amazing canyon with great views – it was outside a pub on a crane heading for concrete!! And people would strap up, be raised up onto the crane and the person would shout 123 BUNGEE – and they would jump.... You see, faith is a bit like that – it's a 123 BUNGEE – you jump – all or nothing – you can't do a half jump and Jesus says you can't do a half faith... Jesus asks for everything!!

ROPE ILLUSTRATION –

So why might this be a problem?

(volunteer)

What sort of things might people love more than Jesus, that they may not be willing to give up?

Money, friends, girlfriends/boyfriends, family, status, having a good job,

And you can have these things, but if Jesus asked you to give up your job, or move away from your home town, or to change your friends...do you love Jesus enough to do it?

Do you trust him enough to know that he knows best?

(Volunteer - **Hold the rope**)

This rope represents all the things we love.... And if we hold these things lightly and we're willing to give them up THEN we're able to follow Jesus...if we **lay these things at Jesus feet** and recognise that all the good things we have are Gods anyway – they're not ours... then we can follow more easily and there's room in our heart for us to trust Jesus – trust that He not only knows best, but that He will always be with us, and will provide for us.

BUT

If we hold onto the things we love too tightly, we can get tangled up in them,

(**Tie the rope around the volunteer's legs**)

loving them too much, that we don't trust Jesus enough to be able to follow him whole heartedly.

And the problem then becomes that we get so used to trying to follow with the rope...

And in doing that we miss out on so much....not only the amazing gift of eternal life... but all the gifts God wants to give us - His love, Joy, peace, self-control... purpose in life - all the gifts which comes from knowing and loving Jesus.

The rich man was able to genuinely say that he had kept all the second laws – the laws about how we should live with and treat other people.... But Jesus knew – his problem was that he struggled with the God centred laws... he struggled to put Jesus front and centre.

Jesus has already paid a great price in order for us to know him and to inherit eternal life, But this inheritance that we receive through the death of Jesus requires some sacrificial love on our part... And God really wants us to know him, He wants us to trust him, to see what God has in store for our lives, God wants us to experience His blessings that we talked about last month. So i would love to urge you... are you feeling tangled up? are you struggling to allow God full control over all the areas of your life? if there's something your holding onto too tightly because you don't trust God enough with it the I want to urge you to trust him... from my personal experience, when you allow God to take control, it's those times where I've received the richest of blessings!

God Bless.